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SUBJECT: CHAD: PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR YOUNOUSMI ON SUDAN,
REFORM

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: President Deby's close advisor Adoum Younousmi told the Ambassador July 3 that, during his trip to Khartoum the previous week, he had found the Sudanese leaders "lacking in vision" in their objectives in Darfur, but "evolving." They had asked for Chadian mediation with the Darfur rebels. Younousmi claimed that the death of Majzub al-Khalifa was not the reason Deby delayed his trip to Khartoum (he did not give the reason) but he believed Deby might go next week. Younousmi disparaged the Chadian rebels with whom he had conducted talks in Tripoli, but he exuded confidence that an accord with the internal opposition would be signed soon (albeit one that would fail to meet the opposition's wider demands). He acknowledged that Deby would be voted out in a transparent electoral system and that Chad needed such a system, but he said that Chad was too immature to move toward it rapidly. He did not accept the Ambassador's analysis that such reform was key to long-term stability in Chad but insisted, instead, that Sudan and Darfur were the source of Chad's problems. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) In his farewell call July 3 on Minister of State/Minister of Infrastructure Adoum Younousmi, the Ambassador presented his condolences on the death of President Idriss Deby's oldest son Brahim (murdered in France July 2) and asked that he pass on his condolences to Deby, in the event that he would not have an occasion to see him before his departure from Chad July 5. Younousmi noted that Deby had not cut short his attendance at the African Union summit in Accra and would return to Chad July 3. There would be no public funeral. (Note: Brahim, renowned for his violence and arrogance, had fallen from favor. End Note.)

To Tripoli and Khartoum

3, (SBU) The Ambassador noted that Younousmi had been doing much travel in the past week, starting with leading a delegation to meet Chadian rebels in Tripoli, followed by his trip to Khartoum to pave the way for President Deby's trip to Khartoum, canceled due to the death of senior Sudanese official Majzub al-Khalifa. Younousmi said that, indeed, he had not had much time to attend to the needs of his own ministry. He would be traveling to Libreville on July 4. He had met President Bashir in Khartoum. In fact, it was not Majzub's death that prompted Deby's failure to travel to Khartoum; rather, Deby had been "too occupied" and the "timing was not right." Younousmi said that Deby might go to Khartoum "after a week."

¶4. (SBU) Younousmi said that some progress had been made in Tripoli. He characterized the Chadian rebels as "controlled by Sudan" and said that progress with Sudan would mean progress with the rebels. As for the rebels themselves, he said he was "disappointed" in what they had to say. He knew them well -- they had all been ministers or advisors of the president. They talked much about transparent elections and good governance but had done nothing to promote those aims

while in government. They had no cause or ideology other than self-promotion.

Dialogue -- Mostly Agreed

¶15. (SBU) Younousmi said, meanwhile, the democratic opposition in Chad had engaged the regime in a dialogue that was making serious progress toward effecting the aims that the armed opposition talked about but undermined through their resort to violence. The dialogue had produced agreement on a substantial reform of electoral processes, something that had been unthinkable over the preceding decade. The next elections (legislative) would be transparent. It was natural for a people to want a change of leadership, and this regime knew that it would have to lose an election some day. Chad was not mature enough for full democracy yet, but the dialogue was moving Chad in that direction.

¶16. (SBU) To the Ambassador's question whether the government had come to agreement with the opposition on all points, Younousmi acknowledged that there remained areas of disagreement, in particular a government of consensus and deferral of the legislative elections (in order to give time for a census). Younousmi complained that these points "were not supposed to be" on the agenda of the dialogue. The dialogue, as originally conceived (i.e., by Deby), was meant to have addressed "purely electoral issues," such as reconstitution of the electoral commission. On electoral issues, he said, there was complete agreement. It was important to understand that this was a "huge step."

¶17. (SBU) The Ambassador said that it was a pity that such

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reform had not been effected prior to the 2006 presidential election. Younousmi bristled, commenting that the democratic opposition had discredited itself by having contact with the armed rebels. He painted a cataclysmic picture of what Chad could have become if the rebels had succeeded -- "worse than Somalia." The Ambassador pointed out that Younousmi had, effectively, just made the case for democratic institutions. Younousmi conceded that stability would "require many reforms" and repeated that "we are prepared to lose an election." Indeed, he said, "we (the regime) could be proud to lose an election." The Ambassador seconded this sentiment.

¶18. (SBU) However, Younousmi said, the ground had to be prepared patiently. In much of Africa, he said, loss of an election was loss of everything, loss of all privileges, loss of all supporters. The opposition parties (being in the opposition) were very weak, both in ideology and resources, built around individuals with narrow regional bases. They had no capacity to put election observers all over the vast country, in which Ndjamena had only ten percent of the population. The Ambassador said that, if Chad made real reforms, the United States might be prepared to bring electoral expertise and assistance to bear -- would Chad be amenable to such assistance? Younousmi said that Chad would not only welcome assistance -- the United States could organize the elections entirely. What Chad (read: Deby) could not accept was public condemnation. Even if criticism were just, it was unacceptable when splashed on the front pages of newspapers.

Sudan as the Source of All Ills

¶19. (SBU) Younousmi said that Chad was unfortunate in its neighbors. It had had good relations with Sudan until recently. Formerly, it had had poor relations with Libya, and rebels in those days had found support from and refuge in Libya. Now it was Sudan. The previous week, Younousmi had met President Bashir and other senior leaders. "I could not see their vision. They do not know what they want. But

their views are evolving." They had told him that continued unrest in Darfur was severely undermining them, and Younousmi told them Darfur was equally serious for Chad. But they had said that if Sudan did what the international community demanded, "ten other Darfurs" would emerge in Sudan, just as Darfur had emerged after they had met international demands on southern Sudan.

¶10. (SBU) Younousmi said that his Sudanese interlocutors told him that Chad's support for Khalil Ibrahim had harmed prospects for peace. Younousmi responded that Chad was no friend of Khalil's. In fact, he told them he had urged Khalil to sign the Darfur peace agreement. The important thing was that Khalil and the other Darfur rebels did not ask for independence. At most, they wanted a federation. A federal system was what had helped Nigeria stay together as a nation. Chad itself was moving toward greater decentralization. Sudan needed to "make the big decision" to "give them their region," to share power and to share oil revenues. A "small minority" could not continue to hold total power in a country as vast and diverse as Sudan. Chinese help would not suffice, and turning to Chavez and Iran only showed Sudanese desperation. Younousmi said they had accused the United States of wanting to gain control of Sudan's oil, an idea he said he dismissed out of hand.

¶11. (SBU) Younousmi said that he feared that sanctions against individuals was not the correct strategy. He had felt in Khartoum that Bashir was backed in a corner. The effect was to "radicalize him," make him more obdurate and desperate. It would be more useful, Younousmi said, to put pressure on China.

¶12. (SBU) Younousmi emphasized that if Darfur were resolved, Chad's rebellion would be resolved. The Ambassador said that the United States was sparing no effort in working for peace in Darfur, but this effort needed Chad's commitment to democratic reform, which would also be essential to quelling the Chadian rebels and promoting Chad's stability. Younousmi said that he was certain that an accord with the democratic opposition would soon be signed. But he insisted that the Chadian rebellion was a function of the Darfur conflict and Sudan's support. He had stressed to the Sudanese that not only Sudan and Chad would be ultimately destroyed by continued conflict in Darfur, but conflict would spread further and even engulf Nigeria. He said that the Sudanese had asked Chad to be a mediator in the conflict. Younousmi said that he had responded that Chad had "no problem" being a mediator, but it was essential that Sudan make concessions on Darfurian autonomy and sharing oil wealth.

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¶13. (SBU) Younousmi said he did not underestimate the difficulty of sharing oil wealth. Chad had devoted five percent of its oil revenues to the regional governments in the south where the oil was located and it ought, in his opinion, to be increased to ten percent. However, the local committees overseeing the disbursement of that five percent had mismanaged the money, so much so that the villages most impacted by the oil operation had seen scarcely any benefit. On his recent swing through the south, Deby had fired many officials and demanded an overhaul of the committees.

¶14. (SBU) Comment: Younousmi is one of Deby's suavest and closest advisors, whom he uses for sensitive negotiations and as regime paymaster. He talks a good game on democracy as being important to Chad's long-term stability, but his remarks on Chad's immaturity (i.e., unreadiness for democracy) are a truer reflection of how he sees the reality of Chad. Chadian counsel to the Sudanese about sharing power and oil revenue was surely unconvincing to them, coming from a country that has a poor record in both areas.
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